

EVALUATION OF  
MONTANA STATE LIBRARY'S  
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

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FOR: The Montana Library Commission

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## AUTHOR FORWARD

This report contains the opinions, conclusions, and recommendations drawn from an evaluation conducted during the latter part of 2003 and the beginning of 2004. The author takes full responsibility for the opinions addressed in this document. The general recommendations contained herein are to be implemented based upon the judgments of the Montana State Library Commission and the Montana State Library administration. They have detailed knowledge of the complex political and fiscal environment. If implemented, the recommendations for more radical change will involve personnel realignments, budget re-allocations, physical space allocations and reconfigurations, and public relations initiatives. While the consultant has offered some practical suggestions, the library administration is best able to determine the exact course to take.

The recommendations in this report are based upon the present environment and a likely future for the state library in the provision, creation, and dissemination of information by and about government. We now have clearer understandings of the implications, user behaviors, and electronic information culture than we had six or more years ago as the Montana State Library (MSL) was beginning to morph into its present structure. At that time the departmental role defined for the Library and Information Services Department appeared to be a good choice and a reasonable means by which to fulfill an important service within state government. Over time, the services of the department have been adjusted and a new emphasis has been placed on the delivery of electronic information along with the implementation of an operational model more congruent with the role of a special library. The agency has been gradually adjusting services and work responsibilities to meet the challenges posed by the changes in the information environment in general, and specifically within state government.

The intent of this report is to assist the members of the Montana State Library Commission in implementing more radical change and to do so more quickly. By re-drawing the goals for this aspect of the agency, by redefining and reprioritizing services, by adjusting personnel roles and scopes of operation along with a redefinition of the appropriate skill sets needed, and by deliberately and wholeheartedly heading in these new directions the state library is more likely to fulfill information needs now and in the future. In recommending some abrupt changes rather a continuation on the path that has been gradually evolving an electronic presence for the state library, the author is recommending a deeper, more essential change in the allocation of resources that breaks with many traditional library services and directs more resources towards the virtual patron because new understandings and different demands are being made by users; things have changed. Some changes recommended within this report are already being implemented by the agency but a speedier and more directed plan for addressing the changed expectations of state government employees and users of state government information is needed. A number of factors make this a good time for implementing major change. These factors include but are not limited to the following: changes in personnel due to attrition and retirements, the requirements for expansion by other service units within the agency, and the improved electronic infrastructure for state government along with growing expectations by state government employees for instant gratification of their legitimate information needs. These issues are bringing more pressure for change.

We already know that change is never easy, the new path is seldom clearly defined, and risk-taking is at the heart of the library business these days. The initiation of this study indicates a readiness on the part of those concerned to consider other possible avenues for achieving the mission of the Montana State Library. Change now will make it possible for MSL to remain an essential provider of information for citizens and to assist state and local governmental officials in making the best possible decisions in this age of information.

Respectfully submitted,

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report and evaluation were undertaken at the request of the Montana State Librarian, Karen Strege, and the Montana State Library Commission. It is intended to provide a general evaluation of the past performance of the Library and Information Services Department (LISD) of the state library, to evaluate the potential for future success in meeting the goals and preferred futures for this service to state government employees, and to make recommendations regarding the future operations and viability of a new entity, the Montana State Digital Library or MSdL intended to combine the functions of the Natural Resource information Service with the information and knowledge management capabilities of the library function of the agency. During this evaluation it was assumed that the provision of professional information for state government employees is a logical and appropriate possible role for a state library. What the evaluation and report questioned are: means/methods, resources in terms of space, personnel, equipment, etc., fiscal possibilities (or impossibilities), and potential for reasonable success given the other roles of the state library. It was also assumed, based upon information provided by the state librarian, that additional funding and personnel resources are not available and are not likely to be available for this department given the current and foreseeable fiscal outlook.

The methodologies used to determine the effectiveness and viability of the services and organizational structure included the following:

- A review of pertinent documents including statistical reports, reference question logs, goals, previous evaluations, and electronic and print informational materials produced by the department;
- A short random telephone survey of 27 state employees working in departments of state government with offices in Helena;
- Meetings with Suzy Holt and with her staff;
- Survey reports provided by the Department Head, Suzy Holt; and
- Telephone discussions with six other state library agencies of similar size and somewhat comparable resources.

The primary conclusions and recommendations of this consultant are:

1. The LISD (as previously configured and defined) cannot adequately achieve the goals for which they strive given the resources available. Attempting to fulfill the function of library as “place” with hours, walk-in services, and collections while also being an effective facilitator in an efficient electronic or virtual resource environment for state government employees is too diversified a role in the circumstances. While the impact of the information they have provided to individuals and agencies is difficult to calculate, it is self-evident that accurate, reliable, and easily obtained information saves the staff time of state government employees and improves the potential for good decisions by government now and in the future. Supplying quality information services in a virtual world while also providing traditional library service is a great deal to ask of six individuals, no matter how talented.
2. There is a clear need for a redefinition of the role of the state library as library — from traditional information provider to information gateway. The role of “library” (physical place with storage of paper resources providing a quiet haven away from the bustle of busy offices) needs to be retired as quickly as possible so that staff and facility resources can be better deployed. The role of facilitator between state employees’ information needs and existing

information resources in other locations, often within Montana public agencies and institutions; and that of creator of appropriate knowledge tools and resources that distill information, provide meaningful pathways to information provided by other agencies and governmental entities, and aid in the decision-making processes of information retrieval both require a revision in the organizational culture. These roles do not require the library to lock its doors but it does mean that personnel and other resources should be assigned based upon a different set of priorities.

3. The employees within Library and Information Services have dedicated themselves to the accomplishment of the goals of the department and have worked hard within the definition of the services as they have defined and prioritized them. They have responded well to the work asked of them by individuals in state government, but the following areas require immediate change and action:
  - A new definition of the appropriate skill sets needed by agency personnel in order to be effective within a virtual service environment.
  - The full implementation of the new management model for this aspect of the agency with the "library" information services being merged with the existing NRIS role and scope to form the MSdL or Montana State Digital Library operating with the belief that good information makes for good decisions.
  - An identification of those traditional library services that are not cost effective and an action plan to cease the provision of such services as part of the role of the Montana State Library.
  - An action plan to implement an appropriate range of electronic services with content acquired from commercial sources, from other state, federal, and local governmental agencies, and with knowledge creation and management as a central role for the MSdL.
4. The service culture of the traditional library organization is important, but today's environment requires that more technical expertise also be applied if the state library hopes to be a key player in facilitating adequate information retrieval to enhance and improve state government. At least some of the needed technical and other specialized experts are already located within the agency and an organizational structure such as the MSdL would take better advantage of the mutual need for both service attitudes and technological expertise. Additional expertise is also required and through attrition and retirements, new position descriptions might enable the agency to hire such needed expertise and skills.
5. The acquisition of print material should cease in so far as possible with the exception of materials required by staff to fulfill their job responsibilities such as professional tools for the Library Development consulting staff and state documents that are a mandated function of the state library. Print journals, reference books, newspapers, federal documents, should all be closely scrutinized with the purpose of reducing the physical collections and their growth. This would free staff time and space and move the information function still further into the virtual realm.

In conclusion, it is the recommendation of the consultant that the concept of the Montana State Digital Library be fully implemented immediately. The concept of "library" as place be superseded by the concept of the state library as an electronic gateway and facilitator for the timely acquisition of needed information within the fabric of the library and governmental community.

Such focus requires the reallocation of resources within the agency and the recognition of the importance of a quality electronic presence for the agency rather than the continuation of traditional

library services. While MSL is dedicated to the best possible service, they recognize that the pressures imposed by limited resources require an attempt to meet the needs of the majority of their potential patron communities even if it means ceasing to meet the needs of a few individuals. The primary clients for the agency are increasingly comfortable interacting with a virtual library and while some individuals still would like MSL to be "a real place" the library is not able to meet the needs of all people all of the time. Just as it is recognized within the information community that different types of libraries fulfill different roles and functions with the resources they provide, it may be necessary to recognize that other libraries can fulfill the need for personal contact and physical place that the state library will no longer provide. The Montana library community has long been a collaborative one. Making some aspects of our existing collaborative model clearer in our own minds as well as more explicit to clients would enable the MSdL to assume an essential role within a virtual information and knowledge environment more immediately.

The recommended changes involve the redeployment of staff, new space allocations, and a customer relations campaign to convey the benefits and appropriateness of such changes. Being responsive to both the needs of primary users and accountable to taxpayers requires MSL to identify what is most central and effective in the existing environment and adapt methods to fit what is seen as the likely future as well as the preferred one.

# INTRODUCTION

The stated purpose of this report is to provide recommendations to the Montana State Librarian and the Montana State Library Commission regarding the continued feasibility of providing information services to state employees through a collection of materials, both print and electronic, and to judge the effectiveness of past efforts to increase the knowledge and use of these services. It has been almost five years (10/1999) since the Montana State Library Commission adopted their preferred future statements regarding the Library and Information Services Department's (LISD) work with state employees. Since that time, not only has the library and information environment changed, but the information culture and expectations within state government, other business concerns, and the special library arena have also been transformed by technological advances, end-user skills, and an ever-growing array of electronic information products and services. The six futures statements adopted in 1999 and subsequent departmental goals were based upon providing both a physical library experience with traditional services (including "a quiet reading area free from distracting phone calls and colleagues . . .") AND a robust electronic information presence. It is increasingly evident here and elsewhere in the information world that without additional financial resources libraries need to make hard choices regarding how best to fulfill their missions. The decision to pursue this evaluation and report was based upon the changes in the information environment and an awareness of how those changes as well as fiscal pressures have influenced the ability of the LISD to fulfill the preferred future anticipated five years ago. At the same time, plans to implement the Montana Library Commission's approval of the Montana State Digital Library (MSdL) made a review of existing resources and ideas regarding the redeployment of them essential.

Initially, questions centering on fiscal concerns and political realities motivated a closer look at the long-term potential for success given the methods and resources available to the department. As budgetary woes have faced state governments and the need for accurate information has become ever more crucial, the role that state libraries can play in assisting government officials in making the most informed decisions has become more evident and important. There is increasing pressure to provide information, analysis, and knowledge directly to the end-user in a timely, efficient, and economical manner. It is therefore reasonable to define clearly the unique contributions and the specific role of a state library in the highly charged information environment. Unlike some state libraries, the Montana State Library (MSL) has relatively meager collections due to a lifetime of under-funding, shared responsibilities across agencies, failure of state agencies to provide copies of state documents on a consistent basis for the library archives and depository program for distribution to other depository libraries throughout the state, and limited space and staffing levels. The MSL does not have huge collections of unique materials, historical documents, and specialized resources and for this reason may actually be in a better position than some state libraries to steer a new course with a more aggressive approach to the MSdL and the provision of electronic resources and knowledge for and about state, local, and national government issues for both government employees and citizens. As the evaluation project evolved and issues became clearer, findings and recommendations centered upon ways to facilitate a more radical and immediate transition to knowledge management rather than resource storage as a key role for the information services section of the agency. Thus the evaluation looked at the past and present services and resource allocations as well as at the issues of space allocation, personnel deployment, and proposed timelines for changes as information and knowledge needs advance.

It quickly became clear during the process of evaluating existing resources and incremental advances that small adjustments would not provide sustaining answers. The agency administration was already working to implement changes as opportunities arose but core changes to the role definition and

the ways in which the agency might fulfill its mission also needed to be addressed. Looking at statewide information resource potential, information futures, and the growing need of government and citizens to have not just information but knowledge helped to identify a clear need for a more visionary approach to defining the information role of the agency. Initially the central questions were "Are we doing the information/reference function well?" and "What changes might improve our performance?" but it became clear that the real questions were "How should we define the information function of the agency?" and "How and when should changes take place?" In other words, perhaps a new definition of the role of this function of the agency was needed as well as some guidelines to assist the administration and library commission in making the necessary changes in this central role.

While part of this evaluation work centered on the effectiveness of the department, the department itself has done much to identify issues concerning their effectiveness and the quality and appropriateness of their services. Their annual electronic survey of state employees has provided them with significant data to help shape their work and to identify needs as well as to inform, this evaluation project. The software chosen to administer and compile the results of the feedback was well chosen and very useful. The questionnaire was revised as appropriate over the course of the three years it was used (2001 - 2003) and insightful and relevant information was often drawn from the results to aid in improving services and addressing the expressed needs of state employees. The evaluation was based upon the existing assumptions about the definition of the department and their role as a library rather than as a gateway to information existing elsewhere or as a possible creator of knowledge based upon available information. While the USD had already begun moving forward towards a virtual presence in state government and towards assuming its newer role as a part of the MSdL, its role has continued somewhat to be based upon a definition of "library" that includes a physical space, physical collection, and specific hours of operation. This definition of the role and scope of the department, even as it moved to help define its role as part of the MSdL kept at least one foot of the department and its resources anchored in the past even while the department also tried to move gradually into an electronic presence and a virtual world.

The departmental personnel themselves expressed it very well when they discussed how difficult it had been to try to work towards goals that relate to extending services to a larger proportion of state government employees while dealing with things like desk schedules, service hours, selection, acquisition, cataloging, processing, de-acquisition, circulation, retrieval, and maintenance of physical materials. During and after their meeting with the consultant they expressed the belief that a larger staff would make it possible to achieve goals. They did not believe that the administration understood the extent of their frustration with the dual roles they were fulfilling. It is unlikely that additional staff could be allocated to assist with their efforts. Rather, the solution lies in redefining the work within the current needs of the agency and state government. No one is questioning the effort that has been expended in providing the services to state employees or the importance and potential impact upon the quality of government that can result when accurate and timely information is provided to technical, professional, and administrative personnel. A strong case can also be made for the impact upon service and decision-making that results from providing just one person within an office, unit, or agency with appropriate information. The survey conducted in 2003 provides some indication of this impact factor by reporting how those who do use the library for their information needs use the information and/or share it with others both within and outside of state government. The ripple effect of good information and the value-added nature of such services is beyond question.

The annual survey has provided a rich mine of data to be used to evaluate and justify the work done by the staff. While the use of electronic resources has greatly increased here as in other libraries, the actual use of the collections, the physical space, and staff expertise has not increased significantly except with regards to the attendance at Internet and database training sessions held by the staff. The traditional services, while important to a relatively few number of professionals and researchers, have



not made a large impact on state government employees. Further details of the surveys and other data can be supplied by the MSL.

## METHODOLOGIES & SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Five primary methodologies were used to gather information that could be analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted regarding the study. These five methods were:

- A review of all pertinent documents and data sets concerning the work of LISD/MSdL.
- A short random telephone survey of individuals working in Helena for state agencies that do not have their own agency library.
- Separate meetings with Suzy Holt, the other LISD personnel, State Librarian Karen Strege, Natural Resources Information Services Director Jim Hill.
- The data rich reports of the three annual electronic surveys conducted by LISD in 2001, 2002, and 2003.
- Telephone discussions with key personnel in six other state libraries.

The findings from these sources are summarized below with some of the conclusions drawn from each.

### Review of pertinent data and documents

The review of the fiscal information provided by the library administration indicated the following key points:

- The total LISD operation, including a pro-rated portion of an administrative salary, the cost of personnel, and the cost of materials (print and electronic) is approximately \$400,000 per year. This information helps to place the work of the LISD in context and to provide a point of comparison when considering its work and the work of other special libraries. It also helps in considering alternative scenarios for configuring services to state employees as well as other clients such as the public and other libraries.
- LISD is spending between \$50,000 and \$ 100,000 per year on information purchases either in the form of print journals and books or electronic databases and journals. While a portion of the printed book and journal purchases are in support of the Library Development program and may need to be continued, many of the other print sources are being purchased in a "just in case" scenario for service to a relatively small proportion of state employees. Some print resources are used primarily as reference sources to assist either other libraries or the public. These sources are often owned by other libraries in the state and have at least the potential for better access through negotiated agreements.
- A portion of one employee's salary is allocated for the processing and handling of state documents and the state document depository program. That function would need to continue almost completely as is unless the statutes relocating this function to the MSL were to be changed. This is, however, a typical and long-standing role for state libraries and one that must be assumed by some agency of state government.

A review of the reference desk logs over a six-month period indicated that the level of inquiries is not very sophisticated nor often have the questions—in person, on the phone or by email—required

someone with a library degree or specialized knowledge to respond. More than 90% of the questions appear to be those that might be answered by a circulation clerk or other paraprofessional rather than a librarian. Numerous questions were of the general form:

- Is X on the shelf?
- Do you have X item/title? (could often be answered by looking in the catalog online)
- What is the password for X database? (could be solved with authentication process eliminating the need for separate passwords and log-ins)
- What are your hours? (could be answered on the Web)
- Who can use the library?
- And other typical "ready reference" inquiries such as spelling and short factual inquiries many of which were answered easily by staff. An increasing number of ready reference questions can be answered on the Web and therefore could likely be answered by patrons as users' skills improve and as the Web becomes a typical source of information for those in the workplace. A local public library could fulfill the ready reference function for state employees in Helena and around the state.

To some extent the preponderance of ready reference questions is typical for a public library but the percentage of such questions for a "special library"<sup>1</sup> appears to be quite high. The conclusion to be drawn from this information is that at least some of these inquiries could be handled by public libraries and state agency professional personnel might be better deployed in more sophisticated knowledge work. The number of reference questions from state employees averaged about 3.5 per day during a regular five-day workweek and from all sources (including the public and other libraries) the average was 6.5 per day.

The review of previous evaluations, goals, and desirable futures statements all include reference to the library as a place for patrons to come. Yet based upon the statistics for use of the library, in addition to the continued use by some members of the public in and about Helena and visitors to Helena, almost all of the use of the physical library by state employees is from individuals who work for a few agencies. These agencies usually do not have their own libraries or information professionals but more importantly they are agencies located adjacent to the state library building and at the western edge of the capital complex. LISD staff members report that some state employees come regularly (even daily) to the library to read newspaper(s), to check their email outside of their office area, to sit in a quiet place to work and/or think, or to browse the stacks, or read journals. All of these uses of the physical space constitute traditional services provided by libraries but they may not be central or essential to the role of the MSdL and its service to virtual users including state employees.

Contrasted with this use of a refuge and "people space" for state employees from neighboring agencies, is the crowded conditions of staff work areas and offices, the lack of adequate meeting space for work groups including staff groups, state-wide working committees, and groups associated with the work of the Commission. With adequate space for agency programs, staff members, and users it would not be necessary to consider prioritizing space use to the exclusion of public spaces. But scarce resources sometimes require that top priorities be addressed at the expense of less important ones. The amount of space allocated for users (casual seating, tables, desks, and computer equipment) and the amount of space allocated for collections cannot be justified by the use statistics. Providing space to enable more efficient and timely functioning of staff within the agency while still providing access to information sources is more important in the current environment than providing a physical library environment for a relatively few users from adjacent agencies and offices.

A review of use statistics including current card holders, circulation, interlibrary loans, database use, and Web and database classes indicates, as one might expect, increasing use of the electronic

resources and a decline in other use, especially circulation. The MSL staff and volunteer use of the collections appears to represent a rather large proportion of the annual total circulation. Some of the use is job related while some is for personal purposes. One of the very successful services LISD has provided for state government during the past two years has been the presentation of scheduled classes to explain the use of specialized databases and to provide instruction in the efficient and successful use of web search engines. These classes have brought many state employees to the library and given the agency new visibility in state government.

The table below indicates the use patterns and the notes provide information about the interpretation of this data for the purposes of this review. The data represents both statistics reported by the state library and data extrapolated from reports giving only partial periods. While some data may not be exact it is accurate in representing the activity of Library and Information Services with state government employees. In addition to these activities, the US staff members provided many of these same services to the public and to other libraries and provided additional services to state employees including research consultations and electronic notification services for information resources. These statistics are reported here to give a sense of the primary transactions and services to state employees. The statistics provide merely a frame of reference for activities for this core client group.

Fiscal year	State Employee Card Holders <sup>1</sup>	Circulation to State Employees	Average Daily <sup>2</sup> Circulation Employees	Reference Contacts with State Employees	Average Daily Reference Contacts	Interlibrary Loans to State Employees	Database Searches <sup>3</sup>	#Attending Training Sessions
FY02	954	2,025	7.93	1,113	4.44	NA	NA	NA
FY03	1,076	1,738	6.82	894	3.51	1,522	10,650	104
FY04	785 <sup>4</sup>	1,852	7.27	830	3.25	1,462	19,600	432

### Telephone survey with state agency employees in Helena randomly selected

In order to get opinions from a random sample of state employees in Helena without having the inquiries coming from the state library itself, 30 randomly selected individuals in agencies in Helena were called by the evaluator and asked five questions. This approach was used to solicit input from, individuals other than those who volunteered to provide it based upon an email message request from LISD. Despite the fact that at least 50% of those who responded to the electronic survey had not used the library, they still considered the library important enough or a Web survey entertaining/interesting enough to respond. The consultant was interested in knowing how the agency and its information services are perceived by state employees in general. The individuals contacted were all from agencies without their own strong library or information component so that they would be more likely to know about and use the state library in the course of their work. The 30 individuals called qualified as professionals, managers, researchers, or administrators based upon their listed title in the state government directory. Two of the 30 were no longer employed by the state and one had relocated to an office elsewhere in the state. The responses from the 27 employees reached during the course of four days of telephone tag are summarized below.

Survey questions and responses:

<sup>1</sup> Based on registered borrowers in this statistical class and includes MSL employees. It does not reflect use of a card but merely registration.

<sup>2</sup> Assuming 255 days of operation per year.

<sup>3</sup> Number of databases varies as does availability of reliable statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Reported as active within the past two years and held by state employees.

**1. To what extent are you aware of the Montana State Library, its programs & resources?**

**Very aware = 3      Somewhat aware = 5      Slightly aware = 6      Not aware = 13**

These responses indicate that almost half of those called admitted to not being aware of the state library and its programs and resources. Given the work of the LISD over the past few years and the location of these employees in Helena, 50% ignorance of the agency and what it has to offer is not a high degree of awareness despite marketing efforts by the staff.

**2. Have you ever visited the state library facility? Yes = 3 (4 for classes)      No = 14**

This indicates that almost half of those questioned supposedly know there is a state library and where it is located. One-third of those who had been to the facility attended classes. This and the question above indicate that while there may be some regular and dedicated users of the state library and its resources, approximately 50% of employees working in Helena at upper levels of state government are unaware of the agency.

Follow-up question:

**What class did you attend at MSL?**

2 - attended Internet/databases classes within the past 12 months

1 - attended MPA classes about 10 years ago (MSU-Bozeman classes delivered in Helena)

1 - did not remember what the class was about but said it was 8 or 9 years ago

**3. On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate the Montana State Library in terms of relevance for your work and the work of your agency? (10 highest, 0 = No opinion)**

**10 = 2    9 = 2    8 = 1    7 = 2    6 = 1    5 = 1    4 = 1    3 = 1    2 = 0    1 = 0    No opinion = 16**

These responses would further strengthen the impression that a few people use the library regularly and depend upon it. They tend to think well of the program. Although 3 individuals ranked the relevancy low for their agency's work, the more startling number is that 16 individuals did not have an opinion about the relevancy of MSL to their agencies.

**4. Do you currently use the information resources of the state library for your work?  
(including electronic databases and other resources)**

**Yes =14      No-13**

Follow up question to those who answered yes:

**Do you use primarily NRIS or other state library resources?**

NRIS primarily or exclusively = 9    Primarily other MSL resources = 5

These numbers are consistent with other responses and further verify knowledge of resources and the likelihood of use. Even for those who use the MSL resources, only about 1/3 use the library resources rather than the NRIS resources. The majority of for those whose recognize use of the MSL resources are reported using NRIS services, files and databases.

**5. Of the following possibilities, which are the two you most generally use to get the information you need to accomplish your work? (reported in order of frequency of response)**

**Colleague elsewhere = 15 (governmental units, higher education system, administration, industry)  
Agency colleagues = 11    Internet - 11    NRIS = 7    Personal files - 6    MSL = 4**

These numbers are similar to those reported in other studies about the information seeking habits of professional people. A personal contact either within or outside of the organization is the most often sought source of information. This is believed to be because of the human connection, the trust built over time, the immediacy of an in-person conversation/phone call/email, and the inclination to find someone who knows rather than seeking something in the form of a document or publication that may or may not exist. These are the same elements being reported in customer service studies in profit and non-profit environments. Once a personal relationship with a member of the organization is perceived to exist by the customer, the customer is more likely to return to the business or source. Without a positive personal relationship, no matter how tenuously defined, the customer will not return to the same source. This has tremendous implications for libraries and customer service. A high school-aged checker in the local grocery store calling me by my first name when we are strangers is a misapplication of these findings.

In general, the survey supports or makes an even stronger case for the belief that many of the programs and services of LISD as a library are greatly under-used regardless of the cost factors. One can argue that those few who do. regularly use the information resources value them and even require them for their work. The use statistics indicate that it is increasingly the electronic resources rather than the more traditional services that are being used. The use statistics combined with the information from these professionals indicate that while it is imperative for good government and good citizenry in a democracy to have reliable current and historical information by and about governmental issues, it is not always, or even often, that the employees approach the agency and resources most likely to provide unbiased and useful data.

**Conversations with Suzy Holt and the other LISD staff members**

Two meetings with Suzy Holt were held in her office in the fall and early winter. At that time Holt graciously shared much information about LISD including statistics, the reports on the Internet

survey, and impressions of what has worked well. Her strong belief in the programs and services being offered by LISD and her appreciation of the good work of her staff were very evident. There has been marked progress in making the agency more visible and in drawing more users to the agency. This progress has been documented in the statistics tracked by Holt and the other members of her staff but the numbers, despite the percentages of increase, do not represent significant numbers of state employees except in the use of electronic resources and the classes to learn how to use and be proficient with these resources.

One group meeting was held with the other six members of the LISD staff at the state library. In addition, four of the six staff members sent the consultant follow-up emails elaborating their opinions or adding additional ideas or insights. The members of the staff were open and honest about most aspects of their work. There seemed to be unanimous agreement on two issues: (1) more staff was needed to accomplish the work assigned, and (2) it is difficult to focus on outreach to state employees when one is buried in work related to collections and staffing public workstations during open hours as well as other assignments not perceived as directly related to state employees. The staff expressed the desire for there to be more cross training and less rigidity regarding the division of responsibilities amongst the staff and between professionals and paraprofessionals.

- The following conclusions were reached by the researcher following these meetings:
- Employees care about what they are doing and are dedicated to doing the job well;
- There is a perception that too much time and effort have been spent defining the path and justifying the work of the unit with regards to state employees and the special library model;
- The definition of how LISD should function as a special library has been traditionally defined until recently but the movement toward a virtual presence has been started with a growing participation in the Montana Library Network, the acquisition of other electronic resources, and the conception of the Montana State Digital Library.
- Any changes to the existing program will require detailed planning to accomplish because of the complexity of the services now provided by LISD including backup reference for public libraries, acquisitions, and research for Library Development, federal depository status and regulations, state document responsibilities, and existing materials, equipment, personnel, and other resources.

### **Survey results from three annual online surveys sponsored by LISD**

It is not necessary here to reconstruct the thoroughly reported and aptly interpreted results of the three annual online surveys conducted by LISD. The excellent reports prepared by Suz.y Holt with colorful graphics and well-written explanatory text clearly reflect the efforts of the departmental staff to achieve a degree of success in making the services and resources of the library more visible and useful over the past few years. The surveys and their reports represent an investment of considerable time and expertise on the part of Holt and her staff. These reports appear straightforward and easy to understand but some further elaboration of the findings may be useful here. Holt's analysis of the results and her interpretation of the numbers present only part of the picture. For example, for the 2003 survey LISD received almost 1,500 responses, twice as many as the previous year. These numbers immediately make one think that the visibility of MSL and the LISD has drastically improved. However, other factors very well might have contributed to this increase in response rate. A sharp increase in the degree of online sophistication and fulltime desktop access to the Internet for a greater number of state employees at all levels of government might be one very practical factor. This means that more people know how to access a URL for an online survey, more people have had experience and are comfortable with online surveys and other online instruments, and perhaps more employees leave their web access open and can

easily switch between online and other computer work. All of this means that completing a survey on any topic is much easier than it was in the past, might serve as a break from routine, and might be viewed as a pleasure rather than a chore regardless of any one individual's interest in MSL and its programs.

The increases in use and users, although sometimes high in terms of percentages, still reflect very small numbers of actual transactions. The agency and its programs have become more visible within state government but that visibility is still limited to less than 10% of state employees. Discounting the use of the state library collection by library employees and volunteers, the use of the collections as indicated by the circulation figures diminishes and makes it difficult to justify the cost of acquiring, processing, and maintaining these resources. In fact, the number of individuals who have used and/or regularly use the traditional library resources and programs including the physical space has not changed dramatically from one year to the next. The greatest increases have been in the use of databases and other electronic resources. This reflects not just the work of LISD staff to improve use but also reflects changes in both the expectations of our society regarding instant gratification and electronic delivery and the increased ease of use provided by the products themselves.

There are numerous examples in the survey and other reports that support once again the conclusion that while much has been done to make the services and the resources of the Library and Information Services Department known and used by state government employees, relatively few individuals have taken advantage of the resources available. This is not to argue that the information obtained has not been very valuable to the recipients. Nor is it to discount in any manner the value to state government of the presumed increase in productivity of those employees who have learned how to use effectively and efficiently the information resources available to them at the state library. There is undoubtedly a positive impact on state government to be credited to the information obtained and the improved information-gathering skills learned by employees because of their interactions with the staff and resources of LISD. It is, however, still not possible to show that the impact, particularly of traditional library services and access, justifies the costs in the current environment nor that this impact is greater or longer lasting than the impact the same funding might provide if directed towards more electronic and virtual information resources and knowledge management projects. Such projects could serve a wider array of governmental and citizen information needs across the entire state while leaving most of the more traditional library services (standard ready reference, study space, Internet access, news reading, and circulation of print resources from an MSL location) to be fulfilled by other library entities.

The survey supports the assumption that almost 90% of the use of the library's resources are by employees whose agencies are located very near to the state library. Common sense explains the reasons for this but it does not provide a reason to continue these traditional services to those located within a certain proximity to the physical building. By reallocating some resources including changes in personnel skills needed to provide appropriate services to a wider array of governmental and citizen information needs across the state, greater access to electronic information and professional research consultation might be made available. The expansion of full electronic service to all state employees with Internet access located in regional and local offices from Yak to Ekalaka would perhaps be a better use of these same agency resources.

### **Telephone conversations with administrative staff in six other state libraries**

Believing that the dilemmas being faced by the Montana State Library in the allocation of scarce resources are not unique to this state, six other state libraries were contacted to identify possible other avenues that might be considered in the resolution of the issues. In each instance the discussion was with either the deputy state librarian or the individual responsible for the "library operation" of the agency.

Every state library seemed to be aware that the cost of the library operation far exceeded its usefulness in the present information environment. In some cases, beautiful buildings built in the last fifteen to twenty years are being staffed with professional and paraprofessional staff with little interaction with patrons except for those pursuing genealogy research and those seeking directions to the offices of other state library services. Since the Montana Historical Society library has the genealogical collection for the state aside from those collections located in public libraries, even this aspect of patron inquiry is missing at MSL.

Aside from the decision made in Idaho to discontinue the traditional library operation and concentrate resources on Library Development and other programs, the six states contacted all expressed concerns regarding the situation along with the recognition that the cost-effectiveness of the traditional library operation has diminished and that the electronic role of the agency has increased radically. Aside from Idaho which has already made the change, none of the libraries could presently see anyway to extricate themselves from the burden of the physical library operation without having to layoff staff, leave facility space dormant, lose large portions of their budgets, and lose "face" within state government and possibly incur disfavor with the taxpayers who supported the agency in the past without understanding the need for prioritization amongst its different programs. It appears that many other state libraries will soon be faced with making hard choices regarding their physical library operations. Once their state governments' fiscal difficulties force them to prioritize and choose the programs to be discontinued within the agency, other traditional, print-oriented library operations will likely be discontinued in favor of programs with high visibility and impact. Programs of high importance include statewide coordination projects, such as the very successful Montana Library Network, natural resources information systems such as the NRIS program, the mandated services for the blind and disabled members of the state, and the state documents programs. The costs of maintaining "warehouse" space for print collections, usually duplicated elsewhere in the state and therefore often accessible through interlibrary loan or other means, is too great to be continued. As the information environment, the costs of physical plants, and the ability to provide access through other means all continue to increase, the options open to state libraries to fulfill this aspect of their missions is also evolving into new models of service.

Although it is difficult sometimes to see the advantages of being small—few staff, little space, limited collections—these elements make it easier to discontinue established programs. Half a dozen staff positions can be gradually shifted into positions that meet the changing skill needs of the agency. Space can be reconfigured and allocated based on the changing needs of the agency and other programs. Dollars spent for physical collections in the past can be redirected to acquire other information resources and services to benefit a broader or different client group.



# CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions summarize this report by identifying four key areas upon which to focus decision-making and change.

## **Role and Scope:**

1. The LISD as it was once configured is no longer as cost effective, by any measure applied to it, than it once was because of a changing information environment and the increase demand by users for desktop delivery.
2. The total number of state employees and others served by the traditional physical library aspects of the agency operation cannot justify a continuation of these services. Despite the quality of information provided and the attempt to meet the needs of state employees particularly in Helena, the costs being born by MSL are too great to justify the raw numbers that reflect the use of the facility itself and the print collections. LIS staff initiatives have increased awareness of MSL and its services within state government but the number of actual users of print resources represents only a small percentage of potential users.
3. The Federal Depository collection of MSL duplicates that of the regional depository library at the University of Montana at Missoula as well as document programs at Butte and Dillon and those at other university libraries in the state, including Montana State University-Bozeman, Billings, and Havre.
4. The function of the state document depository is mandated in state statutes and therefore must continue at this time. However, the emphasis should be increasingly upon indexing and digitizing documents to make state government information more widely accessible to citizens, local government, and other state and federal agencies. Awareness by others in state government of the services and resources of the Montana State Library's library and information services is not well recognized outside of a few, generally physically adjacent agencies.

## **Staffing Issues:**

1. The work of the six employees in this unit has been professional and responsive. They have been dedicated and loyal as well as generous in their attempts to fulfill both traditional and newly defined roles.
2. Both professional librarians and paraprofessional employees have garnered the respect of those state employees and library personnel from across the state who have worked with and/or been assisted by these individuals.
3. Given the evolving complex nature of the work of modern libraries, and the state library in particular, six staff positions is not sufficient to fulfill the roles of both traditional physical library and virtual information and knowledge provider for the wide array of issues, disciplines, and technological specialties represented by state government employees and agency interests.
4. Given that additional staff positions are not likely to be provided, adjustments in expectations need to be made regarding the roles to be assumed by this unit of the agency as well as adjustments to the definitions of the skill sets necessary to fulfill these roles.

### **Virtual Library Applications:**

1. While the MSL has initiated both the MSdL and more active participation in the Montana Library Network, there is much yet to be done to make the services and unique resources of MSL available to a broad range of clients including, but limited to: state employees working on the capital campus and scattered across the state, federal government agencies concerned with common issues within Montana, local governmental officials struggling with managing and interfacing with state government, local libraries (public, school, academic and special), and individuals at large attempting to be well informed citizens of Montana and the United States.
2. The limited number of staff members possessing traditional library skills rather than systems knowledge has resulted in rather poor design for some electronic resources and services. There is a lack of state-of-the-art design and implementation for user-friendly interface and efficient navigation. Most notably, the primary departmental webpage is based upon a model that has proven inefficient to maintain and use as well as being unfriendly and uninviting to most users. There are no graphics, no visual interest, and little categorization of resources to assist users in making helpful decisions as they try to move from the long lists of resources to the most appropriate resources for any given quest. While maintaining both traditional library services and an increased virtual presence there simply has not been staff time or expertise to improve these tools.
3. Information has not been routinely transformed into knowledge such as that provided by NRIS, for example, because of the demands of a traditional library operation with walk-in services and the very real limitations of skills and time.
4. Electronic access to older federal and state documents concerning key issues in Montana has not yet been achieved because of limited time and resources.
5. The services and resources with the most use and the greatest increase in use are those associated with electronic information such as databases, electronic journals, and classes to improve retrieval skills and Internet knowledge and functionality. There appears to be a need for more emphasis on the quality of delivery, ease of access, selection of appropriate resources, convenient training, and collaboration with other libraries to make the most of the potential presented by the Internet and desktop computers.

### **Physical Space and Facilities:**

1. The physical space required to house many of the print resources is expensive "warehouse" space might be used more effectively considering the following:
  - 1) There is insufficient space for meetings, consulting, and other decision process functions within the agency.
  - 2) The employees of the agency that work in other units are sometimes separated from one another due to the restrictions imposed by the public library space.

### **Public Relations and Change:**

1. There is undoubtedly support among some regular users of MSL facilities, both from state agencies and the Helena neighborhood, for the continuation of the "physical library" of the agency. In order to

give these clients fair warning and a positive explanation for the changes, a small public relations campaign will need to be designed and implemented immediately.

2. The Montana library community will also need to be informed about the positive potential for change within the agency.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Listed below are both general and specific recommendations resulting from this examination of the Library and Information Services of the Montana State Library. The library administration and the State Library Commission should interpret these recommendations with their more informed viewpoints and their knowledge of fiscal and political realities for both the short and the long term.

### **Role and Scope:**

1. The move to combine the LISD function with the NRIS function to create the MSdL as proposed and already underway within the agency should be fast-tracked in all of its aspects. The LISD should cease to exist as a separate program within the Montana State Library and should be subsumed under the management and authority of the Montana State Digital Library (MSdL) as already approved by the Montana State Library Commission. By moving more quickly in this direction, greater electronic expertise, a virtual, rather than a physical presence for most information, and a role as facilitator for access and creator of knowledge when appropriate can be more aggressively pursued with a new image and presence.
2. The goal of all MSdL operations should be that of creating and maintaining a gateway for a rich and sophisticated virtual information environment with knowledge added as appropriate. A clear policy statement with specific criteria will need to be developed to define and "put a fence around" this virtual presence as it is newly defined and to prevent the dilution or drift of the central goal over time.
3. MSdL's role should be that of conduit but not a warehouse or physical space for public access. The library should immediately cease acquiring and warehousing print information in so far as possible. The role should be that of central facilitator for the information needs of state government in a virtual world. In fulfilling this role, the MSdL can more effectively serve state government employees, local Montana governmental officials, and citizens desiring information about important state issues. Further, this provides an opportunity for enhancements to the concept of the Montana Library Network by facilitating the further sharing of resources with the explicit purpose of providing Montana citizens through Montana libraries with a government equipped to make informed decisions in a complex world.
4. The Montana State Library, like most state libraries once had the role of the "grandmother public library" for the whole state. This role involved providing back-up reference support because many local libraries did not have adequate print reference collections, a backup collection from which to provide interlibrary loans, and library experts to deal with routine functions that local libraries were unable to understand or perform for themselves. The world has changed! With the training and professional development now provided by MSL through the Library Development Program and the commitment of most local libraries and their boards to professional development, the availability of Internet access for most, if not all libraries, and the electronic

networks that make interlibrary loan a routine operation for local school, academic, public, and special libraries, this formerly patronizing role for state libraries is disappearing quickly. While it maybe true that not all libraries have staff that are sufficiently trained or motivated to improve their skills or that there is insufficient local funding to acquire appropriate tools for access, as in all other enterprises, there comes a point of diminishing returns that requires a clear change. MSL must make some hard choices; it cannot make everyone happy with its choice of services.

5. The mandated role of the state library as depository for slate documents should continue within the already clear guidelines operating within the agency for the acquisition, organization, distribution, and provisions for easy access to these important sources. The continued emphasis should be not only on acquiring and distributing these but upon digitizing and providing the easiest possible electronic access to the virtual citizen and state employee through the Internet and the MSdL. This initiative is already in progress but requires better infrastructure and technical support for improved access and quality.

### **Staffing Issues:**

1. Staffing needs do not diminish with a change in role but rather staffing should be re-allocated within the newly defined MSdL. With current staff vacancies (50% or 3 of 6 positions) due to retirement and moves to other libraries, it is possible to rewrite position descriptions to reflect more accurately the changed information environment and the need for different skills sets to accomplish the conduit and facilitator roles as well as the more sophisticated electronic role. For those individuals still employed within the agency, job descriptions should be re-written with the appropriate skills outlined for the work that needs to be done. At the same time, more cross-training and professional development should be provided as needed. Staff should be redeployed to meet the newly defined needs of the agency in a changing time. Individuals should be retained and retrained based upon their willingness and ability to move into more appropriate roles.
2. The transition to a new structure and work with a slightly different focus should be managed as openly as possible providing opportunities for individual development, the acquisition of new skills, the meeting of new challenges, and improved coordination of similar work across other areas of the agency. In addition a gradual and planned replacement of positions through retirement and attrition can provide further opportunities for change and improvements.
3. More time should be spent by MSdL staff in identifying and actually becoming acquainted with the specialized and forever-too-expensive information resources already available within the state as well as exploring other means of providing access to a wider array of electronic information sources. Understanding more completely the resources that already exist and providing more guidance to state agencies regarding the resources available to them throughout the state would be an effective use of staff time and would further enhance Library Development and MSdL's goals.
4. At least one member of the team needs to have superior negotiation, communication, and coalition building skills as well as professional library information skills. This individual needs to have the ability to build trust and confidence within the library community in order to facilitate access to resources located or licensed in primary libraries across the state. Negotiating collaborative agreements that further facilitate access to appropriate information sources can be difficult under today's complex copyright and licensing laws. The role of the state library as facilitator should be a key element in the effort to serve state government. The model for the type of facilitation that is

necessary to fulfill the role of conduit or gateway is that which has been extremely well demonstrated by Bruce Newell in conceiving, organizing, managing, and facilitating the electronic Montana Library Network. The human network building that is necessary to make the virtual network function well requires expertise and mature people skills. The building of a network to enable MSL to serve the information needs of state government employees through access to existing information resources requires the skill to bring the appropriate people to the table to discuss, negotiate, and solve information delivery and access issues on behalf of government employees and citizens. In addition to the facilitation and network building activities, a staff member must be actively involved in setting policies within state government regarding information sharing, formatting, digitizing, and preserving. The MSL staff should continue to be involved in and take a leadership role in these activities regarding state documents as well as other types of information. MSI staff should spend more time in developing relationships with other information providers and establishing policies that provide for uncluttered pathways for information exchanges and clear responsibilities for archiving and storing both electronic and traditional formats. Coalition building and cooperative projects are what both NRIS and Library Development "do" as a central piece of their work so that it should be an easy move to include these activities in the definition of responsibilities for all MSdL staff.

### **Virtual Library Applications:**

1. The website for USD is not conducive to easy access by users. Long lists of topics and resources do not lend themselves to efficient use. Library terminology inhibits use by those not already conversant in library lingo and the use of commercial product names rather than generic tool names makes it difficult for the virtual client to use the website. Using general terms such as Journal Article Databases rather than product specific names like InfoTrac (only one of many possible general journal databases) would improve access and be self-explanatory for the virtual user. Furthermore, it should be obviously possible to move from one MSL website to another. The client ought to be able to move freely from information supplied by NRIS to information or services provided by Library Development or another department or agency. The clients do not care what the internal structure of the agency is; they only care about getting what they need. Work should begin as soon as possible with the aid of an experienced and talented webmaster to create and maintain a truly useful and functional web presence to replace the current website which is reminiscent of library websites designed six to eight years ago before our more informed understanding of how users approach these tools. This use of professional time can yield big dividends in a relatively short time. There is sufficient experience in this area now that a number of excellent books have been published to aid the library web master in designing pages that work. With a more focused role, staff might be able to provide products of higher quality. Further, with a deliberate redefinition of the skills needed in a redesigned approach to information and knowledge work by the agency, positions can be redefined, candidates recruited with a different skill set, and quality improvements made the design and access to the virtual resources to be provided.
2. A greater emphasis on providing bibliographic linkages to electronic documents and appropriate federal websites would provide access to a large percentage of the documents most often requested by citizens and governmental officials. Most federal documents with frequent use are also acquired in paper by larger public libraries that are not depositories thus providing added access to titles such as the Statistical Abstracts and Occupational Outlook Handbook. The provision of electronic access to older federal documents dealing with Montana and issues of importance for Montana would be a worthwhile project that might be pursued with the Montana University System libraries as partners. The expenditure of resources for such an undertaking would provide a true enhancement to information for all citizens of Montana in a way that

duplication of current information does not.

3. The staff has made fabulous efforts to provide training in the use of electronic resources for state government employees located in Helena. They have used their electronic classroom to present training in basic Internet skills, the use of databases and other electronic resources provided by the state library, and have increased the use of library resources through these classes. Without web-based tutorials that can be used by individuals on their own time and in their own place whether in a rural setting or a large city, the training is still quite limited in potential scope and success. If both expertise and time could be devoted to developing such tutorials, many more individuals could be made aware of the potential of the state library to serve as a facilitator or gateway for the information required to make good decisions and to provide lawmakers, local governments, and citizens with the most accurate and up to date information. There is an opportunity here for the Library Development staff already working in the field to collaborate with the MSdL staff in providing such tutorials for use with an even wider audience.
4. MSL should not only be serving as a gateway to information but should also be creating knowledge by synthesizing and distributing information in order to make data more meaningful and useful to state government and other Montana information clients. NRIS already serves as a model in this endeavor and Jim Hill and other staff members will be able to aid new staff members to think in terms of knowledge creation and not just information access.
5. Further, services extended to those state employees working primarily outside of Helena need to be greatly improved. Without a proxy server or some other means of authentication for users trying to use electronic resources, access to licensed databases, and other files is limited.. The issues relating to access by state employees should be more adequately addressed as it has been for NRIS users although the legal licensing issues are more complex for databases and other electronic resources purchased from outside vendors.
6. The continued role of the state library as a federal depository for paper documents should be re-examined. With so few resources in the state, to have these documents replicated at the regional depository library at the University of Montana in Missoula and at Montana State University in Bozeman as well as at other more selective depositories in Havre, Great Falls, Billings, Butte, and elsewhere is an extravagance considering the cost of processing, housing, and maintaining these materials even though the federal government bares the production and delivery costs.

### **Physical Space and Facilities:**

1. The data all supports the recommendation to cease to provide a place for client use of resources on-site. The exception would be for purposes of appointments for consultation with staff regarding research strategies or other information seeking advice and recommendations. This can immediately help to free staff to implement other recommendations and to cease staffing a reference desk and/or telephone for the occasional user during the course of the business day. Staff can engage in more productive work to make a bigger impact on information provision to state employees and others. The staffing of a reference desk, the provision of "public" computers for checking email, searching the Internet and other electronic resources, as well as user lounge space should be eliminated. MSL can no longer afford to provide these services for the few and must look to ways to provide services to a broader governmental and citizen clientele. Citizens can use other local libraries for these things.
2. Building space should be re-allocated based upon total agency needs and the print collections

reduced further and expenditures for print resources greatly curtailed. Reference or research assistance should be provided via the web and by means of appointments not on a "just in case" basis. The Library Development staff should be alerted if there are libraries that repeatedly need assistance with reference. This is then an opportunity for consultants to work with that library to improve staff skills, to improve resources, and to encourage adequate funding.

3. Should any surplus space be realized in the process of transforming the information role of the agency into a virtual library, other agencies may have an interest in leasing space that is no longer needed once fewer print materials are warehoused for a "just in case" future rather than a "just in time" future.

### **Public Relations and Change:**

1. There is a need for at least a minimal public relations campaign with state agencies regarding the change to an increasing virtual library presence while at the same time there will be restrictions and changes in access to the physical collections and facilities. The message can be given a very positive tone by concentrating on the reasons for the changes, the expected improvements in service, and the ability of the MSdL to provide a wider array of electronic resources, improved access both for those individuals located within Helena and for those located in state offices elsewhere, and the improvement in the quality of the electronic presence that MSdL will have for state government, libraries, and citizens. The use of the electronic mailing list already compiled and employed to provide monthly notifications to state employees regarding library resources can be usefully employed in this endeavor. The continuation of the notification list, perhaps with a slightly different emphasis, can also be considered.
2. At the same time, MSdL will need to work with other state agencies (most notably the Montana Historical Society), units of higher education, and libraries of all types in the state library community to explain the reasons for the change and to allay any fears concerning the changes. The Library Development and Montana Library Network consultants and personnel will be invaluable assets in this process. On a day-to-day basis the proposed changes will have little impact upon other libraries except in positive ways as the electronic improvements provided by the MSdL develop.
3. Members of the public in Helena who have come to rely upon the library and the facility as if it were a public library will also need some assistance in understanding the changes that are likely to occur in the facility itself. Providing information about changed roles and priorities may help allay some of the concerns. But despite the best efforts of all concerned, there are likely to be some few who will remain opposed. It is then necessary to remember President Abraham Lincoln and the fact that "you can please some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time, but you can never please all the people all the time." It is as true in libraries as in politics.

These twenty recommendations concerning the role, staffing, electronic presence, physical facilities, and public relations efforts for the Montana State Library grew out of the findings — statistical, factual, and anecdotal that arose during the course of the study and evaluation. The Montana State Library Commission and the administration of the Montana State Library are the ones in the best position to make determinations concerning the feasibility and practicality of implementing the recommendations. While it is clearly time for some changes, the exact changes and the timetable for making them will be dependent upon practical variables. Change is always painful in one way or another but without it, resources will continue to be allocated and spent in much the same way as they have been

without taking the opportunity to extend the value of each dollar to potentially more users and in a richer 24/7 virtual environment. The future is here and the Montana State Library is in a unique position to be able to respond appropriately.

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